

NARROW WAY

A Poem

by **Ronald D. Ray**



RONALD D. RAY (center)
At the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Photo by Patrick L. Pfister

□ **Ronald D. Ray** lives at Hall's Hill Farm in Crestwood, Kentucky. He is a graduate of Centre College and the University of Louisville School of Law, and is currently a member of the law firm of Ewen, Ray & Morris in Louisville. He served as First Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon in 1984-1985. As a member of the Marine Corps in the 1960s, he acted as an Infantry Battalion Advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps in Vietnam during 1967-1968. In the late 1970s he became the Kentucky Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program which encouraged him to lead the effort in Kentucky for a Vietnam Memorial. He is the Chairman of the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which privately raised one million dollars to build and dedicate in Frankfort, Kentucky, a huge, unique sundial as a memorial to Vietnam service. The Memorial was dedicated on Veterans Day, 1988. A convert to Roman Catholicism, he is currently working on an essay about Merton's impact on his life which helped to heal his Vietnam experiences and enabled him to see them as part of a spiritual journey.

My inner being yearns to pray, to be raised up toward the
light;
Thirst-parched soul longs for refreshment, spiritual lips
seek living water;
My whole self desires to proclaim thanksgiving to God for
life abundant in each new day and with each passing hour;
Monk bent praise resonates throughout my candle-lite
cathedral skull;
I would be gently lifted upon angel wings;
I am desperate for cowl chanted reverence;
But my sin-heavy soul only stone stares among floor flung
shadows;
“Unworthy” sneers my shadow voice;
Accused, my spirit desert wanders darkly amid reptile
abandoned ruins, crawling with past sins which sting my
heart like scorpions;
Unworthy, will I ever sing plain song with His praise;
Unworthy, I am fearful of being refused entrance to His
sanctuary;
Impatient like an erring Hebrew child;
Iust dancing before Majestic Sinai where Moses burnt the
golden calf and made the children drink the ashes;
Voice and even breath are throat caught in dry, ash-sour
mouth;
Stifled, near strangling, I struggle and only hollow form
silent words, straining to bring forth joyful noise through
wind-cracked lips;
Summer shower sudden forgiveness falls gently upon my barren
ground being;
Thankfully my unsung songs are sweetly shaped for Him of
living water who is, who was and is to come at the end of
the Ages.